The Black Cat

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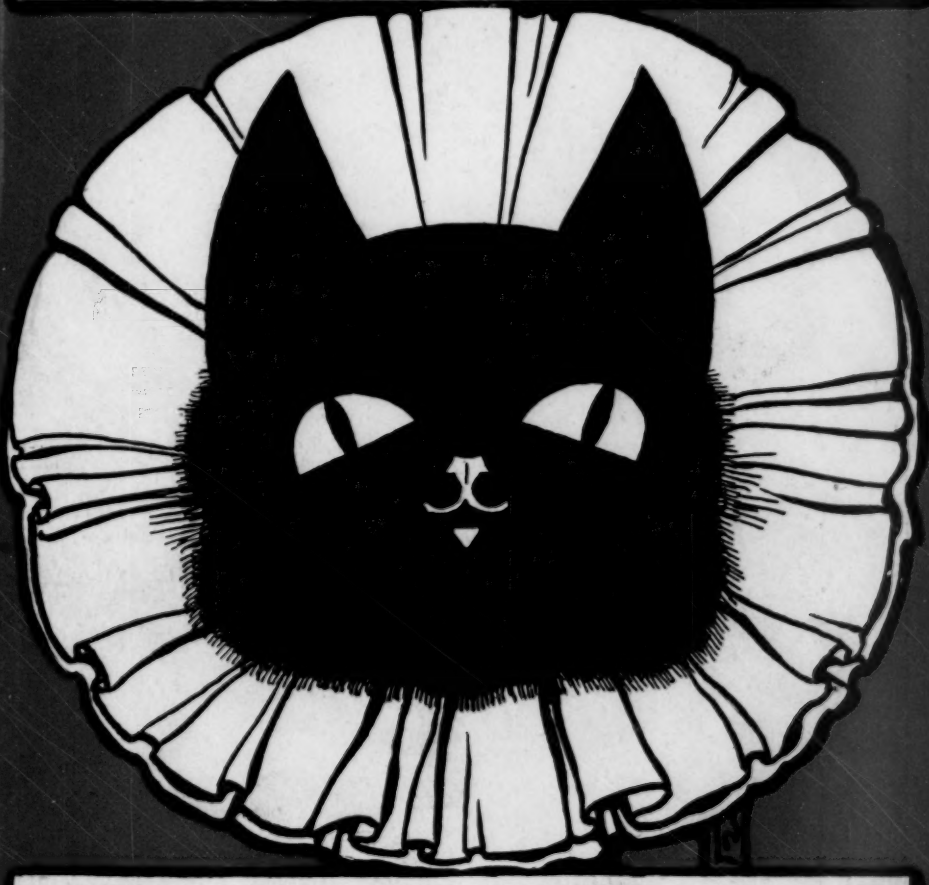

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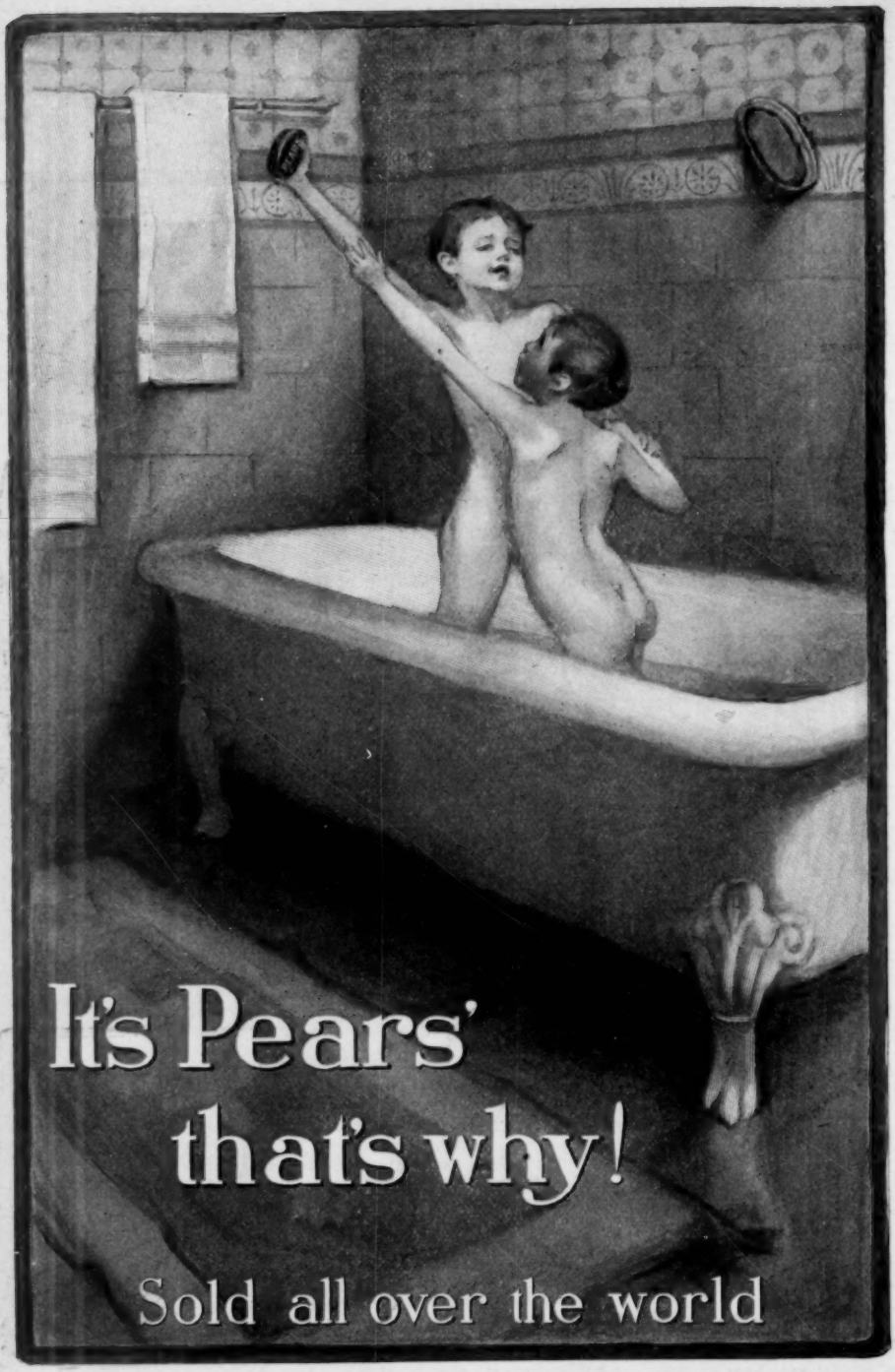

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The Black Cat

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The Yellow Light.*

BY HENRY LYLE.

OUT of the unknown into prominence Mrs. Badger had come at one leap; from whence or what were questions asked by New York's most exclusive few. For others it was sufficient that she occupied the Griswold mansion on the Avenue, kept up the establishment in regal style, entertained lavishly and was seen in all those places where money could take her and many even whose doors were dark to money merely. About all that was certain was that a family whose fortunes were notoriously on the ebb had stood sponsors for Mrs. Badger when she stormed the portals of that Society which arrogates to itself the capital S.

Mrs. Badger's advent had been coincident with the equally sudden announcement of Mr. Griswold's departure for Europe. Amos Griswold was pre-eminently a man of business, and Messrs. Prosé & Prosé, his attorneys, had been astonished one morning by receiving word that he had sailed for Europe the previous afternoon, leaving a book of signed checks in Mrs. Badger's hands, which were to be honored when presented, and that her orders were to be received as though given by him, and a monthly account of his affairs rendered to her.

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So for several months Prosé & Prosé had watched Mrs. Badger's social career with interest. When the elder member of the firm hinted to his son a doubt of Mrs. Badger's ability to handle the Griswold millions carefully, the younger reminded him that a legal adviser's province was restricted, and that "Old" Griswold's written orders had been explicit.

Still the elder Prosé continued to give Mrs. Badger and the Griswold estate more than a fair share of his thoughts during business hours, and from every point of view the matter looked unsatisfactory, especially the strange oversight of a methodical man of business in setting no limit on the amount Mrs. Badger might draw. Finally he came to devote much time *outside* of business hours to Mrs. Badger and her personality. He deserted his club and haunted places where the lady of his thoughts was to be seen. One night his sensibilities received a rude shock when Mrs. Badger coolly cut him as she passed from her carriage to the theatre. When he opened his eyes the next morning, his first thought was of Mrs. Badger. He sat up in bed and looked in the glass.

"Well, well!" he growled to himself, "there's no fool like an old — Never mind, I'm over it, and now I'll find out about that woman — or know the reason why!"

This purpose became the very essence of his life, but yielded no results. No scandal touched Mrs. Badger in her present way of life. No clue to her past could he obtain. He was almost in despair when the following advertisement caught his eye:

> **WANTED.** — Private secretary; young man of good address and thorough knowledge of social usages. Must be qualified to take entire charge of lady's correspondence. Address L.L.B., Herald uptown.

Mr. Prosé the elder studied the advertisement, and thought. "The same," he muttered. "L. L. B. — I verily believe it's the Badger!"

He looked up angrily as he perceived that his mutterings had been heard by his junior clerk, who stood in a respectful attitude holding a bundle of papers.

"Ha! Robinson," he exclaimed in answer to the clerk's question, "You're the very man — good address, knowledge of social usages

and all that — you'll do! If you get to the bottom of this business I'll see that you don't lose anything by it!"

Ford Robinson stood staring. The description fitted him so well that he was too polite not to wait for an explanation.

"Oh!" said Mr. Prosé, "I forgot — you don't know about it." Whereupon he handed the young man the printed slip.

"Mrs. Badger's initials?" inquired the clerk, tentatively.

"Good!" exclaimed the lawyer. "If that proves to be the case, would you like to take the place — temporarily?"

Robinson's heart beat rapidly. Would he like it? Would he like to live under the same roof and in daily communication with the woman whom he had worshipped from afar since first he saw her? It took his breath away.

"Why — why — certainly, sir, if you wish it," he stammered.

"I do wish it," replied Prosé, "if it really is Mrs. Badger. I desire to find out all that can be discovered about her, and everything that goes on in Griswold's house."

Robinson hesitated. "I would hardly like to play the spy — especially on a lady, and so fine a lady as —"

"Oh, I see! Another fool who hopes to find a paradise in that woman's society! Why, she wouldn't look at *you* if her horses were walking on you! Excuse me, Robinson, but — well, never mind; write first and find out if it *is* Mrs. Badger. If it is — go there and secure the place. You can do it. If she's all right, there's no harm done. If she isn't — and I believe she's played some smart trick on Griswold to get him to go to Europe and leave her a free hand — then, we'll uncover her game. *You'll* be disillusioned, in any event," he added with a touch of spite.

He gazed at the young man, as if mentally comparing him with Mrs. Badger's other conquests, and thereupon asked:

"You've seen Mr. Griswold in the office here?"

Robinson shook his head. "He never came in while I was here."

The advertisement was answered, and in due course a reply was received requesting Robinson to call on Mrs. Badger with his references.

His employer was delighted, furnished Robinson with excellent letters from discreet friends, and the young clerk was admitted to the Griswold mansion and Mrs. Badger's presence, after she had

dismissed another aspirant for the place. This respite gave Robinson a chance to steady his fluttering heart and nerves, and study his charmer. She was a beautifully formed woman, above the average height, who held her head like one accustomed to command. Her features were fine and regular, though the lower lip was a trifle full, and her complexion the pink and white developed by extreme care and a masseur's attention. Robinson decided as he gazed that old Prosé was mistaken in his suspicions.

His reverie was interrupted by Mrs. Badger, who, dismissing the man with whom she had been talking, turned sharply to Robinson. As their eyes met he felt as though a veil had been withdrawn suddenly from before his vision. Instinctively his attitude changed from one of admiration to one of defence. He was on his guard—waiting to parry a thrust. Mrs. Badger's character was mirrored in her eyes — all other features failed as indices. To a man whose experience in life, on a newspaper and in a lawyer's office, had given him more than one searching view into criminal courts and the prison pen, that peculiar glitter did not mean position — it was not the steeliness resulting from birth and breeding, not the calmness of erudition. Robinson had seen it often in those who prey on society, accompanying that tension of nerve that results from playing a game in which all the faculties are alert, in which even the rewards of success are not commensurate with the penalties of failure.

The glance lasted but for a moment, and then Mrs. Badger said: "You are — ah — Mr. —? Ah, yes, Robinson — thank you."

She took his credentials and looked them over rather carelessly. The third she read carefully, and then critically surveyed the young man. He was prepared for the sharp query:

"Did you take entire charge of Mrs. Loren's correspondence?"

Robinson bowed. "And also of her establishment," he said.

Mrs. Badger looked at him keenly. "I prefer to manage my own establishment. All you will have to do here is to look after my correspondence, none of which is of a business nature. The question of salary remains to be settled."

Robinson did not permit a trace of his more than natural satisfaction to show when he answered: "I understand then, Mrs. Badger, that I am to take the position?"

She nodded and Robinson named a salary to which no objection could be made. Mrs. Badger rang a bell and ordered the butler to show Mr. Robinson the room he was to occupy.

When his baggage had come, and he was lounging in a large Turkish rocker, before a crackling hickory fire, smoking a cigarette, he felt himself a villain of deepest dye to doubt that Mrs. Badger could be other than his fancy had first painted her — so mollifying to man is a sense of personal comfort. He was aroused by the soft-footed butler's cough and announcement:

"If you please, sir, Mrs. Badger would like to have you come to her rooms. Hexcuse me, sir, will you dress for dinner, sir?"

Robinson was somewhat startled. He had not expected to dine with his employer — not the first evening, at any rate.

He recovered his self-possession. "Oh, yes, certainly. You may help me a bit, if you will — er — what do they call you?"

"Jenkins, sir."

"Well, Jenkins, I'm ready," and he slipped a bill into the man's hand.

"Thankee, sir. We — er — the 'elp will be werry glad to see a gentleman about the 'ouse, sir."

He closed the door which he had been holding open, led the way through a long passage to an entrance at the end which he opened to admit Robinson, and then shut it quickly, remaining outside.

The small apartment which Robinson had entered was the anteroom of a suite entirely separate from the rest of the house. For a moment he stood, dazzled. The room was fitted entirely in deep yellow, and the yellow shades of the electric lights heightened the effect. For a moment he was unpleasantly impressed, though he could not have described his sensation. He started when a man in yellow livery approached, so strange was the man's appearance — so incongruous seemed the small stature and rounded shoulders with the massive head and the face above the yellow coat. The forehead was broad and the nose aquiline, but these signs of intellectual strength were offset by dull and lack-lustre eyes, as though a fool looked upon the world from behind a wise man's mask. And yet the manners of a gentleman seemed to lurk beneath an exaggerated servility that irritated Robinson unreasonably. But the dull eye gave no sign, and the secretary followed his peculiar guide

with the thought that constant service must have driven the poor pigmy into mere automatism.

The drawing-room into which he was shown was, like that which he had just left, furnished entirely in yellow. Mrs. Badger, dressed in yellow satin, stood leaning lightly on the mantel, and watched Robinson keenly as he entered.

"I always dine in my own apartments, Mr. Robinson," she said, "and as you will have to be here much of your time it will be of advantage if you dine and lunch with me. Please be seated."

Then she turned to the quiet figure in the doorway: "James, have dinner served at once."

Robinson, somehow, felt relieved at the obsequious manner in which the command was received. He was not surprised to find the dining room the counterpart, in its color scheme, of those through which he had passed. The meal was a silent one, conversation being confined to guarded inquiries from Mrs. Badger concerning Robinson's duties in the Loren household. He saw no attendant but the servile little man in yellow. Though the lady regarded him furtively with an expectant look, Robinson determined not to gratify this expectation by any allusion to the peculiar furnishings of the suite. But when coffee had been served, Mrs. Badger said:

"I am glad to see, Mr. Robinson, that you are discreet."

Robinson raised his eyebrows in polite inquiry.

"The color of my rooms must have surprised you?" she said, looking at him sharply. Again the peculiar glint in her eyes put the young man on guard.

"I noticed it, of course, but supposed it expressed some taste or fancy of your own. I believe it was Charles IX. of France who, inheriting certain exquisite tastes from his Florentine mother, first adopted monochrome decoration of apartments?" and Robinson looked at his employer as if for concurrence.

"Was it? Well, then, one need not wonder if a modern woman of that race, from which I spring on my mother's side, exaggerate that unhappy monarch's artistic tendencies. I am pleased that you are acquainted with French history."

Robinson disclaimed being a student of French history in particular, and Mrs. Badger, acting as though annoyed, rose from the table.

"There will be nothing this evening, Mr. Robinson. If I need your services any time in the evening, I will tell you of it when we transact our morning business. Otherwise, you are free to make such disposition of your time as you may wish. James, show Mr. Robinson out."

Robinson bowed, but Mrs. Badger, looking past him, kept her eyes on the little yellow man, who moved toward the door and stood with bowed head, holding back the portières. When they reached the ante-room he stopped suddenly, bowed his deferential, automatic bow, and, pointing to the outer door, returned toward the dining-room.

The new secretary's dreams that night were of yellow rooms, beautiful women and Florentine tragedies, and though in the bright sunshine of the morrow his thoughts returned to his earlier impressions of his charming patroness, he resolved not to be lulled into forgetfulness of his mission. At ten o'clock he was busy in Mrs. Badger's library, working steadily till James called him to luncheon, but gaining no new insight into the mysteries of her ménage. Luncheon was served at one o'clock, and everything was as it had been on the previous evening, except that, instead of artificial light, daylight illumined the dining-room, admitted through window-panes of deep yellow glass. Mrs. Badger wore a morning gown of yellow cloth, and James, as before, kept his eyes constantly upon her, but seemed not to anticipate her slightest want. So servile, so attentive, he yet appeared unable to apprehend, until her sharp, clear commands came, the simple and ordinary requirements of the table service, which, to an automaton of years of training, one would suppose to be second nature. Robinson's attention involuntarily centred on the strangeness of this servant and this mistress. Why should she attach to herself such a creature, when the perfect Jenkins might perform the required duties so much better, without a word of command?

James had just served the salad when they were startled by a loud crash, and a base-ball came through the window, carrying with it a large portion of the glass and admitting a stream of sunlight which fell across the table. Robinson started up, but stopped abruptly at a loud exclamation.

"Stop! Who dares break my — Ah — h —!"

It was James who had spoken, and the sentence ended in a long-drawn sigh, like that of one disturbed in his sleep. Mrs. Badger had leaped lightly upon a chair and drawn a yellow shade over the broken window just as the man subsided in the middle of his outbreak. Then she turned upon him quickly:

"James, what do you mean by such unseemly conduct?"

The answer came in the man's habitual mechanical manner:

"Madam will pardon me — I really do not know how I came to do so. It shall never occur again."

"See that it does not — my head will not stand such startling things. Now you may continue the service."

Robinson was conscious that Mrs. Badger was watching narrowly the effect of this peculiar episode. He forced himself to eat and seem at ease, but his mind was on the startling change in James when the sunlight fell upon his face. He threw down the napkin he carried, his dull eyes flashed ominously, his obsequious monotone gave place to a voice vibrant and strong. Only for an instant while the sun shone — then an automaton again.

The young secretary said carelessly: "Ball-playing in the streets is a nuisance. The law against it should be strictly enforced."

"Yes. Did you ever notice anything quite so peculiar as the change in James?"

The question was very innocent or very deep. It must be the latter, Robinson thought, to bring forward so boldly the one strange feature of the occurrence, in the man's very presence. He answered slowly:

"Yes. I have seen one or two similarly strange things. I remember one case where a man was suddenly withdrawn from under hypnotic influence —"

"Oh, pshaw! I'm not speaking of that. If we were to believe Max Nordau, everybody — except himself — is acting under suggestion, and not with free will. I don't mean such improbable things. I had in mind cases of mental disease — megalomania, I believe the alienists call it — where the subject suddenly gets an idea of personal grandeur. A friend of mine used to have a delusion seize him, whenever he heard a certain waltz played, that he was an angel sent to punish the world. Nothing but that one piece of music ever brought on the delirium."

Robinson again sought to parallel the story with a case of hypnotic suggestion, but his mistress impatiently gave the signal that luncheon was finished, thus sending him back to his work.

In his room that evening, he gazed long and thoughtfully at the wood fire and then sent for Jenkins and set him some light tasks.

"Jenkins," he said, "I suppose you find a change since Mr. Griswold went abroad."

"Hi never seen Mr. Griswold, sir. Hi came 'ere hafter Mrs. Badger took the 'ouse, sir."

"Ah. And how do the others like the change?"

"The 'elp sir? None of 'em was 'ere, sir. They all kem when Hi did, sir."

Again Robinson said "Ah!" But he continued, "I suppose James is an old servant of Mrs. Badger's, isn't he? Mrs. Badger's own butler, I mean."

"Hi don't know, sir — 'e never talks to hus, and none o' the 'elp knows 'im, sir. Beggin' your pardon, sir, we hall thinks 'e's a bit hoff 'ere, sir," and Jenkins touched his forehead.

"Too bad," said Robinson, as the servant was leaving the room. He relighted his pipe and stared at the fire, going over in his mind what he had just heard and what he had previously seen. His pipe went out and he sat suddenly upright.

"Yellow is certainly *not* the most becoming color to her — I don't believe she surrounds herself with it merely to keep pure daylight off that old monkey. I feel sure he knows something about this woman — if I could only get it out of him!"

There came a discreet knock at the door, and Jenkins reëntered.

"Hif you please, sir, Mrs. Badger 'as changed 'er plans for the hevenin', sir. She's going to the the-atre with the Wrens, sir, and will you please report to 'er at ten to-morrow morning, sir."

"Thank you, Jenkins. Tell me when she has gone, please."

"Very well, sir. Hi will, sir."

The next half-hour was a trying one for Robinson. He walked the room restlessly, muttering imprecations upon all women. Had the elder Prosé at that moment asked his opinion of Mrs. Badger he would have said that she was an adventuress playing a deep game, but if pressed for a reason could have offered only a tissue of surmises.

When at length the butler had brought him the expected word and gone downstairs, he walked quietly and quickly to Mrs. Badger's suite and tried the door, which, somewhat to his surprise, opened readily. In the ante-room, his strange, expressionless eyes fixed upon the doorway, sat the man he sought. He only stared when Robinson entered, and moved but slightly when spoken to sharply. The young man left him and hurriedly surveyed the other rooms, but found nothing which he had not before mentally noted. Then he returned and shook the strange servant roughly by the shoulder. "James! Attend to what I have to say! How long have you been with Mrs. Badger?"

There was no answer to this question, varied and repeated many times. The miserable wretch sat blankly staring, seeming utterly to fail to comprehend. The close apartment was heavy with Mrs. Badger's favorite perfume. The yellow glare beat down upon them, and Robinson, shaken by the oppression of the situation and the excitement of his adventure, gasped:

"Lord! Come out of this — come where I can breathe!"

Seizing James by the arms, he half dragged, half carried him into the brightly lighted hall.

Instantly the man began to struggle. "Hands off!" he cried sharply in a commanding tone. "How dare you touch me?"

In astonishment Ford Robinson thrust the man away from him. He saw that a startling change had again come over the automaton. The eyes flashed, the hands were clenched, the voice was full of rage: "Who are you, sir? What the devil do you mean by laying hands on me in my own house?"

Robinson looked at him sorrowfully. "Now, James, be sensible. Come, like a good fellow —"

"James! Don't you James me, you young whipper-snapper. Don't you dare 'good-fellow' me, sir. I'll teach you —" Then, for the first time, he caught sight of his yellow clothes. "Why — who — what —" he gasped. "Did you put these things on me?"

Robinson shook his head and held up a warning hand.

"Hush! You'll alarm the servants, and Mrs. Badger will —"

"Mrs. Badger!" almost screamed the man. "Oh, that woman! I'll have her out of this house! And you, you puppy, what are *you* doing here?"

Robinson, of course, had always read of the policy of soothing maniacs, and replied in a conciliatory manner, "I didn't know it was your house, sir. I thought it was Mr. Griswold's."

"Oh, you *did* know it, did you? You merely thought you could come and make a monkey of Amos Griswold in his — "

"Amos Griswold!" broke in Robinson. "Why, *you* can't be Amos Griswold, — he's — "

"Can't, hey? Well, I *am*, and I'll soon show you that I'm master here!"

Robinson thought rapidly, and his thoughts were accelerated by the sound of a footstep in the hall below. Probably the old man was a harmless lunatic, but *if* he were not — if there was in reality a game on foot as deep as he suspected — the player must be securely trapped, and this strange creature must assist, but there was no time for explanations now. Clapping a hand over the old man's mouth, Robinson picked him up and carried him bodily back into the yellow suite, closing the door behind them. He did not pause till he had set the pigmy down at the farther end of the drawing room, that the sound of the explosion of wrath he expected might not penetrate to the main portion of the house.

To his amazement the man stood motionless as before. The personality that had so suddenly flashed out — a choleric and pompous old gentleman — had vanished as mysteriously as it had come, and in its place was the staring, senseless James, whom he was obliged to carry in his arms back to the post of mute vigil in the ante-room.

Fifteen minutes later, having left word with Jenkins that he was obliged to take the air on account of a raging headache, Ford Robinson was in excited conversation with his real employer, the elder Prosé, in a house near Fiftieth Street.

"Well, Robinson — any news?"

"Yes, sir, very important, I think. What sort of a man is Mr. Griswold in appearance?"

"Small, with sloping shoulders, but a fine head, with broad, intelligent forehead, a clean-cut mouth, gray side whiskers. Holds his head like a drill sergeant. What of it?"

Robinson rapidly told all that had happened in the Griswold mansion. Prosé sat with finger-tips together, listened and nodded.

"It must be the yellow color," he said at length. "I've read of such a thing, but never believed it possible. You get right back now, before she returns from the theatre. I'll be on hand in the morning, with a detective. Cured of your love for that she-devil, aren't you?" he could not forbear adding.

The clock had struck ten the following morning, and Jenkins had but just informed Robinson that Mrs. Badger was ready to begin the morning's work when he returned to announce a caller for the private secretary, and ushered in Prosé.

Robinson hesitated but for a moment. "Come with me," he whispered. "You will see the servant. If it isn't Mr. Griswold, you can probably withdraw without attracting Mrs. Badger's attention. If it *is* — we can draw the lioness's teeth at once. Your plain-clothes man?"

"Is at the door below."

As the two men entered the door of the yellow suite, and Prosé caught sight of the liveried automaton standing with head bowed to receive Robinson, he smothered a sharp exclamation, and, pressing the young man's arm, gave a nod of intelligence. The little yellow man turned and held back the portière for Robinson to pass, and then walked immediately behind him, coming into violent contact with Prosé, whom he evidently did not see, and entirely disregarded. The lawyer understood, however, and fell in behind. As the portière dropped over the last doorway, he paused as he heard Mrs. Badger's cold "Good morning, Mr. Robinson."

Then he lifted the curtain and passed through. Mrs. Badger spasmodically grasped the table's edge. She was undoubtedly startled, but under admirable control. With all the air of well-bred surprise she could put into it, her tone was sharp and cold as she said, darting a rapid glance at Robinson:

"I should prefer to be informed when I am to expect your calls, Mr. Prosé. Please wait in the library. James! Show the gentleman to the main hall."

The old lawyer wavered a moment under her steady gaze and authoritative air.

"You will excuse me, madam — there has been a great crime committed." Then, his indignation returning, he almost shouted, "What are you doing with Mr. Griswold? What magic do you

employ that I find one of the shrewdest financiers in New York dressed up like a monkey, taking orders from you? Out with it!"

"Sir! You forget yourself. Mr. Robinson, if you are responsible for this madman's presence in my apartments, take him out before I call for help."

This ill-timed outbreak fortunately gave the usually cool lawyer an opportunity to collect himself. Uninvited he took a seat and said:

"Not so fast, madam. *I* am sitting in at this game now, and I hold the winning cards."

Mrs. Badger paled perceptibly — she well knew the difference between the danger to be feared from an angry person and that from one cool and collected.

Placing his finger-tips together in his favorite attitude, Prosé continued:

"I am here to rescue Mr. Griswold, and to punish those guilty of this strange crime. How you got Mr. Griswold under your influence and how you keep him disguised as a servant are questions that — "

A sharp dry laugh from Mrs. Badger interrupted him.

"My dear sir," she said, smiling, "your professional zeal for a client shall excuse your gross breach of social etiquette. I see now what you mean. It is clearly a case of mistaken identity, and one quite easy to prove. James! Tell Mr. Prosé how you came into my service."

The old automaton, stepping toward the person at whom his mistress's finger pointed, said in his monotonous voice:

"If you please, sir, I came to Mrs. Badger while she was in London. Came direct from Lady Surrey, sir."

Prosé watched him closely, and as he finished said sharply:

"Don't you know me, Mr. Griswold?"

The only answer was a shake of the head.

"There! Now, James, show Mr. Prosé to the main hall. If he has any business with me I will attend to it in the library," and Mrs. Badger resumed her seat, as though the interview were at an end.

Ford Robinson, during this exciting scene, had been putting himself between the group and the nearest window.

Prosé now turned to him: "Mr. Robinson, may I trouble you to open that window wide? This pecu —"

The woman was on her feet again in an instant, and broke in:

"Mr. Robinson is under *my* orders. Mr. Prosé, I ask you again to retire!"

"Go ahead, Robinson," exclaimed the lawyer. "Be quick!"

In a moment the window was wide open, admitting a flood of pale winter sunlight, and Prosé pushed the little man in yellow forward into its full glare. A tremor ran through the man, he drew a deep breath, and then, drawing himself to a height not devoid of dignity exclaimed:

"What is going on here? What is the meaning of all this yellow flummery? Hah! Prosé! Explain, sir!"

For a moment the three principal actors stood facing each other. Then the woman — whatever her name was — perched on the edge of the table by which she had stood, swung her feet and smiled at Lawyer Prosé as she said:

"Well, the game is up, and you *did* have the cards — but I had a good run with the old man's money first!"

The Spectrum Page.*

BY RICHARD BARKER SHELTON.

PROBABLY a third of the people of the civilized world know of the existence of the great glass company, one of the wealthiest of corporations, and at least a third more have seen in shop windows in all parts of the globe glassware of every description, clear as crystal or most perfectly colored, and annealed by a wonderful process, which renders it so tough that an ordinary blow has no effect upon it.

Some time, when you have purchased a hock-glass of perfect tint, tumblers marvellously wrought, or even a humble lamp-chimney — a triumph of perfection in its way — and when you are wondering at the process which gives you these articles at a figure ridiculously small, turn them about and you will find somewhere on them a small stamp like this:

It is the Allglass Company which has revolutionized the art, and which came into existence through a strange chance.

For years glassware had been John Temple's hobby. His house was filled with the choicest gleanings of many lands. His uncle, whose name he bore, had left him enough of a fortune to devote his time to such things, and he followed his bent with a zeal sufficiently below mania to be termed genuine enthusiasm. During his days of collecting, two points were brought forcibly to his attention. He could procure glasses of the most beautiful tints, but at a price which made them beyond the reach of people in ordinary circumstances. Again, when he had procured a treasure, it must be kept in a case or handled with care lest some chance slip might prove its destruction.

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To overcome these two things — to make a glass of perfect coloring and at the same time one which would be tough enough to be serviceable — Temple bent all his energies. That it could be done he was positive, but ten good years of his life, spent for the most part in an evil-smelling laboratory, netted but scant results. He had, however, made some advancement, and his determination to accomplish his end was no whit lessened.

One afternoon in March, after weeks of disheartening work, he had discovered a process by which perfect amber tints could be obtained at a nominal sum. It was three o'clock when he finished work and locked the laboratory. It was Temple's custom after hours of concentration to walk down town, pausing now and then to peer into shop windows, that the trifling interest he found there might relieve the strain of the preceding hours.

It was a windy afternoon and heavy clouds hung the sky. He walked briskly, for the air was chilly, and it was not until he was well down town that he paused before the windows of a second-hand bookshop. Within was a miscellaneous collection of books in a more or less battered condition — volumes of encyclopædias, Dickens, Thackeray, and textbooks — and, strewn about, paper-covered novels with suggestive titles and more suggestive sub-titles. In the centre of the window was a huge family Bible, opened, the text of Matthew on the right-hand page, and on the left a blank page of the "Family Record."

As he stood there, the sun broke through the clouds. A moment later he was staring through the window with wondering eyes. On the page of the "Family Record," indistinct at the beginning, but growing clearer as he read down the page, were these words, written in a cramped but painstaking hand:

— this method of annealing gives a toughness which will resist any ordinary shock. It is, moreover, if practised on a large scale, cheaper than any known method, and for —

The remaining words were quite illegible. The rest of the page was seemingly a blank. He read and re-read the words and then rushed into the shop.

"Let me see the Bible in the window," he said to the clerk, with as much nonchalance as he could muster.

When the book was handed to him, Temple turned at once to the last page of the "Family Record." It was perfectly blank. He

scanned the preceding pages and searched through those headed "Marriages" and "Births." He found merely a few conventional entries in faded ink. "Overwork," he thought to himself, as he went up the street, yet when he remembered every detail of the writing the explanation was far from satisfactory.

Two days later he stood again before the window. It was, perhaps, an hour later in the day than his previous visit. The sun shone from a cloudless sky. There were the battered books and the novels, and there was the Bible. It was with a queer thrill that he turned his eyes to the record page. He could scarcely believe his sight. In the same cramped hand he read these words:

— practised on a large scale, cheaper than any known method, and for years I sought to put this knowledge in the proper hands. I distrust D. C., which makes it —

The words began a little lower on the page than before. There was the same indistinctness at the beginning and end. Again Temple sought the shop and asked to see the Bible, and again the page was blank. He went outside and waited until the Bible was replaced in the window. The writing was the same, save that the words "impossible for me to" appeared at the end. He walked up the street and back again. When he stood once more before the window the sun had set. The page was again blank.

Far into the night Temple sat before his fire trying to solve the mystery. Had he called up, in his concentration, some psychic force? It would have seemed plausible, had he been possessed of any faith in such things. Yet, no better explanation presenting itself to his mind, he went to bed more disturbed than he had ever been in his life.

Many times after that he went to the bookshop. Always, when the sun shone, he read portions of that cramped handwriting. Sometimes it was the same text — sometimes new, and once words appeared on the margin of the first chapters of Matthew. He noticed that the position of the sun seemed to determine the portions he read and following up this clue he made an important discovery. The block next the bookshop was extended some four feet nearer the curb than its humbler neighbor, and this additional four feet had been utilized for an extra side to the show-window. The store next door was occupied by a drug firm and in the corner of the window nearest the book shop was a huge glass globe

of red liquid. By careful measurements, Temple found that where the red light came filtering through the globe and fell on the record page of the Bible the handwriting became visible. He could have shouted with joy at his deductions. The rest was plain enough then.

Once more he asked to see the Bible and inquired its price.

"We ask $4.75," said the clerk, tentatively, "its age — "

Temple listened as patiently as possible, handed out a five-dollar note and had to be called back for his change as he hurried from the shop with his possession to hail a cab. On the way up town he stopped at a photographic supply store and purchased a ruby lantern. Then he sped anxiously homeward.

He took the Bible and lantern into a dark room and turned the red light upon the "Family Record." Instantly the pages and the margins through several chapters of Matthew teemed with that handwriting he knew so well. And this is, in part, what he read:

September 3, 1856.

My Dear Son: I write this at the house of David Clapp, who has advanced the capital for my experiments. I am sick — I fear with mortal illness. I write this that you may share with me the knowledge that my experiments have been a complete success and that by sharing it (the knowledge is yours and mine alone) you may have the upper hand of this man Clapp, whom I have good cause to believe has no intention of keeping faith with me. He has made several moves which have shown his low motives of greed. I can plainly see it is his one aim to find out the secret of the process and then to turn all the profits to his own uses. I shall write down all the data for you to-day on these pages and destroy all other papers. This to guard against Clapp, who, I believe, has no scruples so long as he can accomplish his end. I write this in a spectrum ink visible only in a red light. If you return from your journey abroad before I pass away, I can tell you in person. If not, I can only trust your quick wit to fathom my meaning in these phrases in the note I leave you, "Let your light be in the Bible — Matthew 1, xiii especially. See that it is *read*." I trust when you read them your mind will turn to the time when, a little boy in my laboratory, you were content for hours with the little piece of cardboard and the bit of red glass which made the letters come and go at your will. God keep you, my boy! May you reap the harvest of your father's life work.

Then followed a complete description of a process for making, coloring and annealing glass, which is jealously guarded by John Temple, treasurer of the Allglass Company. How the son failed to fathom the hidden meaning of his father's note — if he ever received it — is still a mystery, for to this day the man who discovered the process is unknown.

Major Bruerton's Wooing.*

BY FRANKLIN B. WILEY.

"IT'S the most curious courtship you ever heard about."

Young Eliot Lerwick glanced up at the speaker. She was just settling into the car-seat ahead of his with the deft, sidewise movement that women make in swinging their skirts out of the way as they sit down. He caught a glimpse of the rose-tinted curve of an oval cheek and the white plumpness of a slender throat, from which she was pushing back her high jacket collar with a small, daintily gloved hand.

It was her voice rather than her remark that had attracted him, and he listened now with a pleased intentness to her clear, musical tones and inflections as she went on talking to her companion, a fresh-faced matron dressed in mourning:

"They met at the Mayhews' soon after he settled in Maxfield last April. But he didn't call for the longest time, although he was invited to, of course, and it was perfectly plain that he was deeply interested in her. They had nearly given up expecting him when, one evening about half-past nine o'clock, he called, and stayed until after eleven. Think of it! That was last June, and he has called at the same hour almost every evening since then. But he hasn't declared himself yet. Did you ever hear of anything so queer? Why Philippa Lerwick allows it to continue I cannot understand."

Eliot was startled by the sudden mention of his sister's name. It roused him with a sort of shock from the mood of restful satisfaction that had stolen over him while he was absent-mindedly contemplating the girl, and admiring the graceful poise of her head, the well-bred jauntiness with which her stylish hat rested

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $100 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

on the lustrous coils of her dark hair, and the entrancing effect of a tiny curl that nestled just back of one delicate, shell-pink ear.

He felt a natural desire to hear more about this strange affair in which his sister seemed to be concerned. But the girl's next words were drowned by the strident tones of a train-hand as he hurried through the car calling out the names of the stations at which the train was to stop. A minute later the car began to move, and the next moment it rolled out of the huge, dusky interior of the train-shed into the failing light of the late September day.

Unable to make out amid the rumble and jar of the train what the girl was now saying, Eliot leaned comfortably back in his seat and looked idly out of the window, while the car swung with gathering speed across the switches, swaying from one side to the other with each rapid shift from track to track.

At first he could think only of what he had just overheard. It perplexed and annoyed him. Who could this newcomer in Maxfield be? Why did Philippa let him call so regularly at such an hour? She must have known that it would be talked about; so why had she not stopped it before people began to gossip?

But at this point he reflected that there was no use in puzzling over the matter when he would soon be at home and could ask his mother and sister themselves about it. He thrilled with pleasure at the thought, and his memory went back with a leap to the chilly April day when he had last seen them, more than two years before. He remembered with what a forlorn sinking of the heart he had responded to the final good-bye they waved to him from the front veranda as the company marched past on its way to the station; and he recalled with a faint smile how hard it had been just then to carry himself with the martial dignity which he felt was demanded of him as a second lieutenant. He wondered if they had changed very much, and if they would be surprised at the alteration in himself. Of course they would not expect to find him exactly the same. But would they be prepared for the transformation that more than two years of campaigning in Porto Rico and Luzon had wrought in him? To be sure, he still showed to some extent the effects of the wound that had resulted in his being invalided and sent home on a six months' furlough. But

the home-voyage had done wonders for him. He was almost as bronzed as before he had been shot, and he had regained more than half the weight he had lost while in the hospital. He might still be a trifle gaunt and sallow; but he assured himself, with pardonable pride, that no one could help remarking the difference between the boyish subaltern of two years before and the veteran captain of volunteers who was now chafing with impatience to realize the bright anticipations of his home-coming.

The train had already left the long rows of city houses behind, and was speeding across the picturesque Riverdale Fens toward the open country. Some tall poplars and the high arch of a small stone bridge stood dark against the crimson west. Then the view was shut off by the wooded shoulder of a low hill, past which the train dashed with a resounding roar, and swept into the stretch of straight track that runs like a rule from Valleyford to Glenwood.

Eliot looked with delight at the familiar features of the home landscape. In the fading afterglow, meadows and hillslopes, house roofs and church spires seemed almost as unsubstantial and dream-like as in the visions of them that he had so often seen in his mind's eye by the camp-fire and on the march. But his heart sang within him that it was all a joyful reality, and his hungry eyes feasted on each well-known prospect as the train rushed on.

Before Hillsborough was passed it began to grow dusk, and when the train stopped at Maxfield, the station lights were gleaming through the growing darkness. Eliot alighted just behind the two ladies, who hurried across the platform and entered one of several carriages that were in waiting. All that he could see in the uncertain half-light was that the younger one was tall and trim of figure and quick and graceful in movement. He did not get a look at her face, but he heard her voice once more, and was sure that its vibrant melody would enable him to know her again.

As he started homeward it made him feel almost like a stranger to find that the straight board walk which used to lead from the end of the station platform to the turnpike had been replaced by a curving gravel path bordered by shrubbery, and he welcomed with a momentary sense of relief the sight of the old familiar elms in the little green on the other side of the road. He began to wonder what changes he would find at home, and to question

whether he had done well in planning to surprise his mother by arriving before he was expected.

The night had fallen swiftly; a few stars were already out, and here and there a window was lighted up. As he paused at the crossing to let several carriages from the station go by, three men came up behind him.

"I tell you there is some mystery about it," one of them said.

"The whole affair is certainly peculiar," declared another, whom Eliot instantly knew by his voice to be Maurice Vernor, an old classmate; "and one of the queerest things about it is the way he acted when Gregory congratulated him on his engagement."

"When was that?" exclaimed the first speaker. "I hadn't heard before this afternoon that there was any engagement."

"Neither had Gregory," replied Vernor dryly, as they moved on only two or three paces behind Eliot. "But you know him — always taking things for granted and putting his foot in it. His wife heard some gossip a short time ago about Miss Lerwick and her mother having been shopping in the city a great deal, and told him that she believed there was an engagement, and that they were getting the trousseau ready. Of course it didn't take him long to twist this harmless bit of conjugal guesswork into a positive statement that the engagement had actually been announced. So when he saw the Major at the station yesterday morning he stepped up and congratulated him. I never in my life saw a man look more puzzled than the Major did at first. Then, as he grasped the meaning of what Gregory had said, he flushed violently and the next moment turned so pale that I thought he was going to faint. He recovered himself with a palpable effort, and looking Gregory straight in the eye with a glance that was like a sword thrust, he said, 'Mr. Gregory, gentlemen do not jest on such a subject and if I hear any more loose joking at the expense of the young lady whose name you have so unwarrantably coupled with mine, I shall hold you personally responsible.' And with that he swung on his heel and left Gregory literally quaking."

"But look here!" cried the first speaker. "You say this happened yesterday morning, and the wedding invitations were posted early enough to-day to go out by the last mail delivery this afternoon. You don't mean to tell me that there has been time

enough in the interval for them to come to an understanding, set the day, order the invitations, and get them engraved, printed, addressed, and mailed so as to reach us when they did!"

"It doesn't seem possible," agreed Vernor.

"I tell you," pursued the first speaker, with impressive emphasis, "either the ordinary time-record for doing all these things has been broken into little bits, or else the Major lied to Gregory."

There was a significant pause, which Vernor ended. "I give it up," he said. "It's beyond me. But there's something wrong."

"I only wish I had the right to interfere and sift the matter," burst out the hitherto silent one of the trio. "I'm certain Miss Lerwick is being imposed upon in some way. I think that brother of hers might have had horse-sense enough to stay at home and look after her and his mother instead of skylarking after dagoes all around the Philippines."

A moment later "good-nights" were exchanged, and the last speaker came on alone at a more rapid pace. He passed Eliot with a swinging step, but hung on his heel for an instant at the next corner while he lighted a cigar. A carriage was just turning from the side street into "the Pike," and as the flare of the match fell for a second on his face, a voice — the same that Eliot had heard on the train and at the station — called from the vehicle:

"Oh, Mr. Gilbert! How fortunate! I was just on my way to your house. Would you mind taking this parcel to Harriet? She needs it for to-night; and I'm afraid my mother may be growing anxious about me. Thank you ever so much! Yes, I came out on the express with Mrs. Mercer. She returned from Washington this afternoon. I've just left her at her house. By the by, she'd only heard a hint about Philippa Lerwick and the Major; so I had to give her the details."

"I'll wager you didn't give her the very latest news about them, Miss Percival."

"What makes you think so? What is it?"

"Their wedding invitations are out; they came in the last delivery this afternoon."

"Mr. Gilbert! you don't mean it! Why, I told Mrs. Mercer that he hadn't proposed yet. When is it to be?"

"The seventeeth of next month, at Saint Paul's."

"Oh, I'm sure there must be some mistake. I shall go straight over to Philippa's this evening and ask what it means. Why, Mr. Gilbert, the Major went in on the train with me this morning, and he never mentioned Philippa nor gave me the slightest hint that there was anything between them; and he told me he would probably be away for three or four weeks."

"Three or four weeks! That's cool! The seventeenth is only a little more than three weeks away. He'll have to leave off the last week, if he means to be at the wedding."

By this time Eliot was beyond ear-shot, hurrying on more anxious than ever to reach home — his head in a whirl; a thousand thick-coming fears and conjectures treading tumultuously on each other's heels, as he hastened under the arching elms along "the Pike" and up the winding drive to Merryhill, the family home.

He faltered at the door, smitten with renewed fear as to the effect that the shock of his sudden return might have upon his mother. But quick ears within had heard his footfalls; there were rapid footsteps in the hall, the door opened, and his sister appeared on the threshold, while a little way behind her stood his mother, with one hand pressed against her bosom.

"Dear Eliot! I knew it was your step," cried Philippa, as he kissed her and then caught his mother in his arms.

There was no chance for any explanation in the early part of the evening, much as Eliot desired it. Even had there been no interruptions from Betty the housemaid, who tripped in several times, her face wreathed in smiles, to ask for directions, or from old Hugh the butler, who came in grinning broadly to get Master Eliot's baggage checks, it would not have been easy to make enquiries, for his mother and sister, who fairly beamed with happiness, so plied him with questions that he had little opportunity to ask any himself.

Even after dinner, when they went back to the fire-lighted library, the gentle catechizing was continued. But at length the tide of talk began to ebb; and finally a moment came when only the snap and crackle of the burning wood were audible as the leaping flames in the wide chimney-place sparkled over the shining brass of the andirons and fender and the polished mahogany of the furniture, and gleamed on the gilded backs of the serried

rows of books all around the room, and sent fantastic shadows flickering over walls and ceiling.

Eliot's impatience for an explanation of the meaning of what he had heard on his way home had become somewhat tempered by reluctance to intrude a topic that might disturb the quiet of this peaceful hour. But if the habit of self-control, born of his two years' training as a soldier, had up to this moment enabled him to repress every sign of his turmoil of mind, the habit of acting with decision and without delay, acquired in the same hard school, now impelled him to take prompt advantage of this opportunity to learn at once what he wished to know. Without hesitation, therefore, he turned to speak to his sister; but, as he looked at her, his purpose wavered and a sudden strange diffidence seized him.

This was not the Philippa of former days, girlish, care-free and open-hearted — this regal woman reclining in her easy-chair as on a throne of state, while the firelight shone on the coiled glory of her burnished hair, the white and rose of her flower-like face, and the exquisite outlines of her shapely form. He was still debating how he should begin to question her, when she looked at him, a tender smile curving her imperious mouth and brightening in her clear brown eyes, and said with a pretty air of gentle reproach:

"You have not congratulated me yet, Eliot."

"About what, Philippa?" he enquired, innocently.

"Didn't you get my letter?" she asked in surprise.

"Which one?" he responded. "I haven't had any from you since I left Manila."

She exclaimed in dismay. "I sent it in care of the steamship company at San Francisco," she explained. "I was sure it would reach there in time. But I remember now, you told us that the steamer made an unusually quick trip and got in ahead of time."

"Yes," he assented, "that's probably why the letter missed me. But you haven't told me what the news is yet."

"I am going to be married," she said softly.

"My dear girl," he cried. "He is the one to be congratulated."

"Ah, but you won't say so, when you know who it is."

He was too absorbed, however, to take in fully the implication of her words. On the instant he came to a decision. "Perhaps I do know him in a way," he said, gravely; and added, in re-

sponse to her look of questioning surprise: "I overheard some people talking about you both, on my way out from the city, and, to be frank, what they said rather startled me."

"What did they say?" Philippa calmly enquired.

"They said, for one thing," Eliot replied, "that 'the Major,' as they all called him, has been coming here after nine o'clock almost every evening since some time last June, and staying until nearly midnight."

"Oh, no!" cried Philippa, quickly, "he has called only two or three times a week, and he has never stayed much after eleven; has he, mother?"

"No, dear," answered Mrs. Lerwick. "But it is true that he always comes after nine o'clock; and you know, Philippa, I have repeatedly told you he ought to call at a more seasonable hour."

"But he is unable to," protested Philippa.

"You know well enough you have admitted that he has never given you any good reason why he cannot," returned her mother, severely; "and he always calls everywhere else except here at the proper hours."

"That is strange," remarked Eliot.

"Oh, it is not the only strange thing about his conduct," declared Mrs. Lerwick. "He never seems like himself when he is here; he is as prim and stiff as an automaton; and sometimes he ignores what is said to him in a way that I think is positively rude. But Philippa can see nothing to criticise, and he is certainly devoted to her. So far as I can learn, he talks of nothing but his love for her, and hers for him. In speech he is a paragon of a lover. Otherwise the man is a perfect stick. Would you believe it, Eliot, he has never even offered to kiss her!"

"Mother!" cried Philippa, with a crimson face.

"It's true; you told me so yourself; and you didn't warn me not to tell."

"You like him, anyhow," declared Philippa, desperately, "you know you do."

"Yes, dear, I do," admitted Mrs. Lerwick at once. "He has impressed me from the first as one of the best and most delightful men I have ever met; that is, he has impressed me that way everywhere except in my own house. It's curious, Eliot, now I think

of it, how I've seen more of him and learned to know and like him better elsewhere than I have here; and how Philippa has seen so little of him anywhere except here that, if he had not called on her so regularly, she would hardly know him. My belief is that he's so sensitive and has such a horror of gossip that he has tried to avoid it, and has simply made matters worse, as retiring people are so apt to do."

"By the by, how long have you been engaged?" Eliot abruptly asked his sister at this point.

"Just eleven days to-morrow," she replied, with amusing promptitude.

"Eleven days!" he echoed, "and the invitations out already! Isn't that rather rushing matters?"

Philippa flushed. "Mark had special reasons," she explained, "for keeping our engagement quiet and for hurrying the wedding. But how did you know about the invitations?"

"I overheard about them," he replied, "and more than that, I overheard Maurice Vernor telling how your Major denied at the station yesterday morning that you and he were engaged."

Mrs. Lerwick uttered an exclamation and Philippa looked mystified, but incredulous. Before she could speak, Betty went bustling through the hall, and immediately Eliot heard the voice of Miss Percival at the front door, and Philippa hastened out to greet her.

A low-toned colloquy followed, interspersed with silvery laughter and the sound of kisses, and then the two came into the library and Eliot was introduced.

"I've heard so much about you, Captain Lerwick," said the newcomer, graciously extending a little hand, "that you hardly seem like a stranger. I hope you have entirely recovered from your wound."

Her limpid gray eyes looked solicitously into his. But when, still retaining her hand, he assured her, with needless fervor, that he was quite well again, the humorous dimples at the corners of her large, mobile mouth deepened, and her red lips parted in a smile so bewitchingly sweet and yet so roguishly challenging that, with soldierly promptitude, he lost his heart to her then and there.

Meanwhile Philippa had lighted a large piano lamp and now

drew her friend down beside her on a sofa, and for the next half-hour the talk was wholly about bridesmaids and dress and the wedding arrangements. But Eliot could see that their pretty neighbor had something on her mind, and at last out it came.

"Philippa dear," she asked, hesitatingly, "is the wedding really to be on the seventeenth? Is the date on the invitations correct?"

Philippa looked at her in amazement. "Of course it is, Rhoda," she replied. "Why do you ask?"

"Because the seventeenth is only a little more than three weeks off," answered the girl, blushing with embarrassment, "and the Major told me this morning on the train that he was going away and would probably not be back for three or — four weeks."

Eliot saw his sister's hands close convulsively and the color die out of her face. But with assumed carelessness, she answered in a strained voice, "Probably he did not stop to think exactly how short the time is to the seventeenth."

Rhoda changed the subject at once, and, after a few commonplace remarks, said that she must go. She declined Eliot's offer to see her home, declaring that the maid who had come with her would be all the escort she needed. Eliot did not press the point. He had a question which he was anxious to ask, and, as soon as their visitor had gone, he asked it.

"Philippa," he enquired, bluntly, "did you know that the Major was going away?"

"No, Eliot."

"Didn't he speak about it last evening? Don't you know where he has gone?" questioned Mrs. Lerwick.

"No, mother."

"Humph!" ejaculated Eliot, indignantly. "By the way, who is he? You haven't told me yet."

"You know him," responded Philippa. "Major Bruerton."

"Bruerton! Good God!" exclaimed Eliot, staring at her.

"What is it?" she cried, growing paler if possible than before, as she watched his darkening face.

"There is some rascality back of all this," he said at last. "Just what, I can't fathom now. But I've something to tell you about Bruerton that I never thought to breathe to any one. Under the circumstances, it's only right that you should be told. As

you know, he commanded our battalion for several months, and took a great fancy to me. I liked him immensely, and we became very intimate, and when I was wounded he helped to carry me off the field. That evening I told him about Aunt Caroline's diamond ring that mother insisted I should take with me because she thought that it might help me where money might not, if I ever happened to be in a tight place. I showed it to him, and begged him to keep it for me. But he demurred, because he was likely to be in the field for an indefinite time, and feared he might lose it. He was much worried about it, and finally hid it under the lining in one of the bottom corners of my leather despatch-case. In the night I was roused from a doze by some one moving near me. It was Bruerton, and he had my despatch-case in his hands. I saw him take out the ring, slip the case back behind my pillow, and leave the tent. I was so dazed by the surprise and suddenness of it, and so weak and light-headed, that I never stirred nor spoke. I thought it might be a delirious fancy, and in the morning I asked the attendant if any one had been in to see me. He said that Major Bruerton had. I managed to get out the case and examine it. The ring was gone. I have never seen Bruerton since."

As Eliot ended, his mother threw her arms about Philippa, crying, "Oh, my poor darling!" and burst into tears. But Philippa herself, erect and dry-eyed, continued to regard him a little longer with an inscrutable look. Then, murmuring that the lamplight hurt her eyes and the firelight was pleasanter, she gently disengaged herself from her mother's clinging embrace, and, rising to her feet, steadied herself with her left hand on the back of the sofa and reached over to put out the light.

Eliot saw that she was trembling in every limb, and stepped forward to help her. As he did so, his eye was caught by the flash of a diamond sparkling on the third finger of her left hand in the full radiance of the lamplight. The setting was of a rather peculiar pattern. He stood stock-still gazing at it for an instant, and then, seizing her hand, raised it nearer the light and examined the ring intently.

"Who gave you this?" he asked.

"Mark," she replied, breathlessly. "It is my engagement ring."

He dropped her hand and stepped back, facing them both.

"Mother! Philippa!" he said, hoarsely. "I will take my oath that this is Aunt Caroline's ring that Bruerton stole from me at San Mateo."

Philippa swayed, and he was just in time to catch her as she fell. She had fainted.

In the anxious weeks that followed, no message was received from the missing Major, and no glimmer of light was shed on the vexed questions, why he had left and where he had gone. In all Maxfield there was no one about whom so much was said and so little was known as Major Mark Lawton Bruerton. But Philippa's confidence in him never wavered. Even the shock of Eliot's revelations could not shake it. For her faith in her lover's loyalty and integrity rose superior to all such trivial things as evidence and proof. She *knew* that he could explain everything when he came back, and that he would come back she did not doubt.

So the wedding preparations went half-heartedly on, and the day for the ceremony drew nigh and finally dawned. In the interval Eliot had naturally found it necessary to hold frequent conferences with Rhoda Percival, ostensibly about Philippa; and it was astonishing how many points were constantly arising that needed immediate and prolonged consideration before they could be satisfactorily settled. Doubtless he derived more profit, if less pleasure, from his discussions with Maurice Vernor, and his occasional consultations with Rhoda's father and Dr. Heath, the family physician; but he generally found it easier to dispense with these than with his talks with Rhoda, especially when some detail of the wedding had to be settled. Feeling sure, however, that there would be no ceremony, Eliot had privately had a circular engraved, announcing that the wedding had been postponed, for unexpected and unavoidable causes, to a date that would be announced later; and he had arranged to have copies of this circular delivered about an hour before the time set for the ceremony, if the Major had not returned and explained matters before then.

When therefore Philippa, looking like a spectral Dido in her shimmering wedding robe and trailing orange blossoms, insisted on being driven to St. Paul's at the appointed hour, it was to peer forlornly into an empty church, and pace in tragic silence a

draughty vestibule, and then pass back with a stony face to the carriage, and be driven home in despair too deep for tears.

As a last resort Eliot had that morning bethought himself of telegraphing to a friend in the War Department at Washington on the chance that, although the Major had resigned from the army, the department might have kept track of him. Late in the afternoon came a long reply stating that Major Bruerton had recently been in San Francisco in attendance on a private court of enquiry held, pending action upon his resignation, to investigate charges against him of conduct prejudicial to the interests of the service. The court had reserved its decision owing, it was said, to the perplexing fact that, although the testimony proved that the Major had done what was charged, it also proved that he had unquestionably done it from the most worthy and commendable motives, while he himself denied positively that he had done it at all.

About half-past eight that evening, Eliot was sitting alone in the library at Merryhill, trying to make out what this fresh instance of the Major's incomprehensible conduct could mean, when Vernor came in with the news that the missing man had returned and was at home. Three-quarters of an hour later, the two friends were on their way to the Major's, in company with several other hastily summoned witnesses, including Mr. Percival, Dr. Heath and young Gilbert. At their destination they were informed that the Major had gone out at the hour when he usually called on Miss Lerwick. Hastening to Merryhill, they entered the drawing-room to find Mrs. Lerwick stooping over Philippa, who was seated upon a fauteuil sobbing as if her heart would break, while a few feet away, stiffly balanced on the edge of a reception chair, was Major Bruerton.

He was a tall, compactly built, strikingly handsome man, with piercing eyes and a soldierly presence. His gaze was fixed intently on his betrothed, and there was a pathetic expression of baffled devotion and deep yearning in his look. As Eliot, Vernor, and two or three others stepped in front of him, his glance wavered as if he were trying to gaze past them at Philippa again. Otherwise their presence did not seem to disconcert him in the least, and he did not alter his attitude.

"Perhaps, Major Bruerton," said Eliot, sternly, "you will con-

descend to explain your unexpected presence here this evening after your most extraordinary absence from town this morning."

The Major slowly rose, and still more slowly sought out Eliot's sombre countenance in the circle of unfriendly faces before him.

"Eliot," he said, in a monotonous voice, "I did not expect to find you here." Then, after a pause, he added, "I came to see Philippa."

To the onlookers his cool indifference of manner and extreme deliberation of speech savored of studied insolence. Eliot's blood glowed through the dark tan of his cheeks, and with a fierce oath, before any one could interpose, he struck the Major full in the face.

The latter, to the amazement of every one, made no effort to ward off the blow. With a strange, distressed cry, he staggered against the chair on which he had been sitting, and clutched the back of it. Steadying himself, he gave a most portentous yawn, and straining back his shoulders and half raising his disengaged arm with a prolonged muscular contraction, as if he were stretching, he rose to his full height, and glancing round the ring of lookers-on with a wide-eyed stare of utter bewilderment, exclaimed in a thrilling tone, "What does this mean? Where am I?" and sank back unconscious.

Under Dr. Heath's prompt treatment he soon revived, and a half-hour later the doctor entered the library, to which the rest of the party had retired, rubbing his hands with satisfaction and showing a cheerful countenance.

"I am happy to be able to report, gentlemen," he said, "that no ill effects are likely to follow the shock which Major Bruerton has suffered, and which in some instances of this kind has been attended by the most serious results. As you have doubtless already surmised, he was a somnambulist of the most pronounced type. I say 'was' because, so far as medical science can forecast the future, he will never be one again. The blow that roused him from his life-in-sleep broke forever the fetters that bound him to that extraordinary existence. The mystery of many of his acts is a mystery no longer. Although the impulses that governed him in his active sleep owed their origin to his waking thoughts and feelings, he was as completely unconscious in one existence of all that he did

in the other as if he had actually been two men, each living in a different hemisphere. He tells me that for years he has been subject to attacks of overpowering drowsiness in the evening. At first, when they recurred only at long intervals, he tried to resist them; but, as they increased in frequency, he gradually fell into the habit of going to bed as soon as he felt them coming on. He had begun to fear that in time they might force him to relinquish society, as they had already caused him to resign from the army. This dread and the charges hanging over him kept him from showing the charming young lady who has promised him her hand any attention in his waking life, but could not prevent him from following the irresistible impulse of his heart in his life asleep. It is somewhat trying to her to find that the man who wooed and won her is in a sense not the man who is to wed her. But" — and the good doctor's eyes twinkled — "you will be glad to know that I have every reason to believe the Major will eventually succeed in reconciling her to the change."

The doctor's faith in the Major's ultimate success was soon after fully justified when a double wedding, in which Philippa and the Major and Rhoda Percival and Eliot were the principals, was solemnized with elaborate ceremonial in St. Paul's, at high noon one October day, before a large and fashionable assemblage.

One of Eliot's wedding presents to his sister was Aunt Caroline's diamond ring, which, in spite of his protest that it was "all in the family," the Major insisted on restoring to him.

"Well," said Eliot, as he finally yielded and reluctantly took the ring back, "if you will compel me to become an accessory after the fact and a receiver of stolen property, at least tell me one thing: Where in the world did you discover such a safe hiding-place for it that you never found it when you were awake?"

"My dear boy," was the reply, "to answer that question I would have to walk in my sleep again, which God forbid that I should ever do. I fear that the hiding-place of the ring will have to remain the one unsolved mystery of a curious courtship."

The Window of Tonathiu.*

BY SCOTT IRVING LITCHFIELD.

EVERY traveller who has penetrated the interior of Mexico to that stony region, the "pedregal" of Queretaro, has seen, at a distance at least, that huge cliff which runs from north to south and rises abruptly from the level plain to a sheer height of nearly five hundred feet, and, if of an adventurous disposition, has even attempted the hazardous and almost impossible task of climbing to a collection of archaic ruins perched on a wide shelf within a few yards of the summit. If he has had the rare fortune of gaining that nearly inaccessible place he has stood upon a spot from which few human beings ever departed alive.

On the morning of Monday, May 28, 1900, James Mason left the camp from which, the previous noon, he had studied the distant cliff, attracted by a brilliant flash of light, which crept slowly down the face of the precipice and suddenly disappeared. He was accompanied by Mara, an Indian, whom he had succored in a dying condition in a lava desert. When, at ten o'clock, they reached the base of the cliff, they separated, Mason choosing a direct ascent toward the most prominent of the ruined structures, while the native sought an easier route promising less fatigue to his weakened system, not yet restored to normal health.

Mason, though a practised climber, found the cliff the stiffest bit of scaling he had ever attempted. The wall was of a hard, greenish-black basalt, and even the edges of the fissures, which gave precarious hold, were of glossy smoothness. More than once his heart stood still as his fingers slipped in particularly dangerous places. But by the aid of tough grasses and cacti growing in the crevices he worked his way upward till but fifty feet above him projected the ledge which had formed his objective point. Hang-

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ing on by fingers and toes, flattening his body to the wall and struggling upward foot by foot, he at last clambered over the edge of the projection. It proved to be a barren little spot, nearly circular in shape and but a few feet in diameter, and thickly carpeted by a fine gray dust. As Mason paused to take breath before lifting himself over the low rocky parapet surrounding this bed of dust, he noticed that the color of the cliff had abruptly changed to a dull gray, and where he rubbed against it it crumbled to powder. Losing no time, he pulled himself into a secure position, perceiving that his upward journey was ended, in that direction at least, for the wall above was absolutely perpendicular, and a portion of a ruined temple overhung his resting place.

The fine gray powder rose in clouds, irritating his eyes and nostrils, as he essayed to traverse the narrow ledge to seek an egress, but at almost the first step his foot slipped into a crack concealed by the deep dust, and he fell, with a sprained ankle pinned into the crevice so that the least movement not only caused the keenest agony but bound the imprisoned foot more securely.

Frantic shouts to Mara brought only mocking echoes from the cliff, and at last the explorer lay exhausted and silent on his dusty bed, staring helplessly upward into the intensely blue and cloudless sky, feverishly wondering how long it would be before help came from the Indian, or his comrades in the distant camp became alarmed. He remembered some strange looks and gestures of the native when attention was first called to the ruins, and his heart sank with a vague dread.

His gaze wandered over the face of the cliff above and the overhanging roof of the temple, on a portion of whose ancient floor he now knew himself to be lying. The roof was far above him, and was of circular form, composed of huge blocks, surrounding a central disc of crystal clearness, smaller than its fellows. It was about four feet in diameter, convex, and perfectly transparent. A small bird, flying above, was magnified to enormous proportions.

As he lay studying this curious mosaic, the sun, in its upward course, touched with a shaft of light the outer edge of the great lens, and, following the golden beam with his eyes, Mason saw a wonderful sight. When the ray was cast on the ashy grayness of the cliff, an elliptical blotch of intense light sprang up beneath its

touch, and the crumbling wall slowly took on a dull red glow, such as one sees in a dying ember. As the sun approached the zenith the splash of light with its accompanying glow of heat crept gradually downward and assumed a more exactly circular shape, decreasing in size. The blinding spot slowly descended the wall, leaving a smoking wake behind it. As Mason watched, a lizard ran from its hiding place and, crossing the scorching pathway, curled and smoked and fell to the man's side, a brittle cinder!

With a hot but freezing flush of horror Mason realized that he was lying in the focus of an immense burning glass, fixed in place with fiendish ingenuity in some bygone age! The shelf on which he rested was the destined converging place of those terrible rays!

In a spasm of terror he raved and cursed and prayed, but still the relentless pencil of light grew smaller and brighter, and came nearer and nearer! Already he could feel the heat from the glowing, crumbling wall.

His brain rocked with the heat and the horror and he closed his eyes. Through his half-closed eyelids he could still see and feel the glowing beam of heat, but now, as in a dream, a haze seemed to intervene, and to overspread the heavens. Birds, with frightened cries, flew by with quickly beating wings. The sky was darkened. Then all noises, except that of a tremulous breeze, died away, and a strange, weird hush fell upon the earth.

Mason opened his eyes. It was not a dream. The earth was silent, the heavens dark! The blinding ray of heat had disappeared, and the wall, still warm, had lost its threatening incandescence. Bewildered and wondering, he lay gazing about him, and was not conscious of surprise when a portion of the wall at the end of the shelf moved a little and then swung outward, revealing the mouth of a small tunnel, framing the pallid face and blood-stained form of Mara, the Indian.

Speechless he remained, as the native released him from the durance so nearly fatal. He could not understand the awful danger escaped, the strange silence and darkened sky, Mara's bloody garments and wild expression.

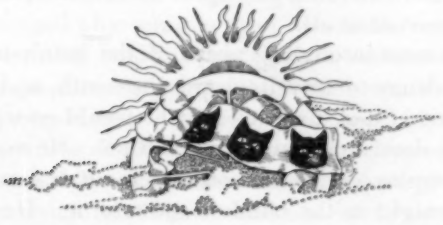
The Indian spoke:

"Listen to the voice of Mara, the last of the Jonaces — the last of the priests of Tonathiu! Listen in awe, and give thanks that you are not as these ashes! You saved my life from the desert; I have saved yours from a greater power — from the god Tonathiu himself — who has permitted me to do so. This is his temple, the ancient sacrificial place, where, each day at noon, Tonathiu looks down through yonder window to kiss that which reposes here. I knew that you would climb to this spot, and that naught I could say or do would stay you. So I came by another way, meaning to lead you hence by the secret passage of the priests, but a puma attacked me. I killed him at last, and as I fought I prayed and promised Tonathiu my life for yours, if he would only save you. Behold him now! He listened to his faithful servant, and veiled his face! But he shall not be cheated of a sacrifice!"

Suddenly waving his arms above his head, the last of his race plunged to death, four hundred feet below!

Over the grim basaltic cliff a pale light had been spreading, growing stronger as Mason gazed, till the scene was once more bathed in golden sunshine. Then he knew.

As he groped and stumbled through the dark passage to safety, it was with a pang of pity for the superstitious, self-sacrificing pagan that he remembered the date — the 28th of May — the day of the sun's eclipse, and that the scene of this adventure lay in the path of its totality.



The Man from Beyond.*

BY FRANK LILLIE POLLOCK.

PROFESSOR BIGELOW'S expedition, it will be remembered, sailed from St. John's, Newfoundland, on the 29th of May. It was despatched by a Canadian university, assisted by the Dominion Government, and its objects were to collect specimens of Arctic natural history and to more accurately map the northern coast of Hudson Bay. About the middle of June its members landed on the terribly rugged and forbidding extremity of Baffin's Land and penetrated fifty or sixty miles into the interior, and there, to their unspeakable astonishment, they found a white man, alone, fur-clad, painfully moving south on foot, and apparently demented.

At first they had to use force to make him stay with the party, and it was no easy matter, he being a big man and tremendously strong. They could not determine his nationality, for, though there were good linguists in the party, the man remained sullenly silent. At long intervals he muttered to himself a few words, but they afforded no clue. It was thought that he might be a Russian; he had long, shaggy, fair hair and blue eyes, though his face, weather-beaten, seamed and cracked with repeated freezings, was as dark as any Eskimo's. It was surmised that he had been lost from the crew of some whaler and that the terrible hardships he must have endured had upset his mind. The miracle was that he had survived at all.

Perhaps the most interesting phase of the man's mania was an irresistible tendency to travel toward the south, and it was only when they went in that direction that he would go willingly. He never could be deceived about the direction. He seemed magnetized like a compass needle and could pick out the cardinal points in the darkest night or the blindest snowstorm. He would never sleep save with his head toward the Pole, and from his slumber he would sometimes start, crying, "Sood! Sood!" and bolt towards the south, and then he would have to be brought back by force.

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A few weeks later the expedition came upon a band of Eskimos, who recognized the stranger, and told a vague tale of his having come down from the farthest north, — from that unknown region which their fancy peopled with strange beasts and ferocious men. They said he had been wandering southwards for a long time, being always well treated by the aborigines, who attributed to him a supernatural character on account of his madness.

When at the end of the summer the scientists turned homeward, the stranger was, of course, taken with them, and during the southward voyage he was quieter and seemed more content than ever before. He was placed in a hospital, where those in charge decided that the case was not in their line. When his hair and beard were cut a long, reddish scar was revealed, running completely across the top of the head. But it was entirely healed, and as the man seemed in no especial need of medical attention he was removed to an asylum for the insane. He did not prove a very tractable subject, however, for he rebelled against the detention and his great strength made him difficult to control. The impulse of his mental disease still seemed to be an irresistible tendency toward the south, and he made several unsuccessful attempts to escape, with attacks of violent delirium at each failure.

From the first, the scar on the patient's head had attracted the attention of the physicians of the asylum, and they agreed that the man's insanity might very well have resulted from an injury to the brain. When it became evident that the poor fellow could never recover his mental faculties under the mild treatment being pursued, and that his more frequent paroxysms were rapidly wearing out his rugged physique, so that his death was only a matter of time unless relief could be found, the question of an operation to relieve the pressure upon the brain which was thought to exist was seriously considered. As there were no relatives or friends to be consulted, it was decided to perform the operation, with its undoubtedly grave risks, as a humanitarian measure, and not at all from mere curiosity, as the procedure was by no means new.

But the immediate result of the operation, which passed off without a hitch, was quite unexpected and led to a most remarkable discovery. Lieutenant Ross, the only person remaining in the city of those who had brought the man back from the far

north, had been invited to be present. Possibly the patient, on recovering sanity, might recognize him as a link connecting the present with the past, and feel that he was not alone among strangers, especially if unable to rally.

Ross remained just outside the operating-room door, from which, after a long time, one of the surgeons emerged, with news of the success of his colleagues, and holding out a thin bit of yellowish metal, as large as half a small knife-blade. "See," he said. "Squeezed against the left lobe of the brain we found this."

"Brass!" exclaimed Ross.

"A bit of brass, undoubtedly. He must have been struck with some brass-mounted article and this bit penetrated to the brain and has been causing all the trouble since. There's every reason to hope that he will have all his wits again when he recovers from the ether, and you'd better see him when he revives."

So Ross waited with the two physicians watching beside the cot. The patient was long in reviving, however. Evening came on, and still he lay unconscious in the dimly lighted ward, moaning at intervals, and sometimes muttering unintelligibly. Twice the Lieutenant caught the word "Sood," which the stranger had used so often. Perhaps it was the only word they would ever hear from him. Ross knew that the looks and actions of the surgeons, impassive as they were, could mean but one thing.

In about an hour the third physician, who had taken away the bit of metal, came into the ward, his eyes shining with excitement.

"Look here!" he ejaculated in a low tone, exhibiting the fragment taken from the man's skull. "Do you know what this is?"

"Why, brass — isn't it?" answered one of the others, still keeping an eye on the sinking patient.

"Gold, by all the tests. I've just been examining it in the laboratory. It's pure gold — but it's hard as steel! Gentlemen, it's tempered! Tempered gold — who ever heard of such a thing!"

With his pocket knife he hacked at the edge of the bit of yellow metal, which was not notched by the process.

"It's been part of some weapon," continued the doctor, excitedly, but in the same subdued tone. "A knife-blade, arrow-head or spear-point. But where in the world can they harden gold like steel, and make swords and spears out of it?"

The members of the little group looked at one another, and the full wonder of the thing began to grow upon Ross as well as upon the doctor who had made the wonderful discovery.

"Suppose he dies," said Ross.

"He mustn't," was the impatient answer, "not till he has told us his story. Think of it! It's a thing that science daren't dream of. Wait, we'll get the secret out of him!"

The three medical men consulted eagerly together, while the patient, who had ceased his moaning, lay in what seemed to Ross a perfectly comatose condition. A couple of nurses were sent for and a stimulant was administered.

The effect was very soon apparent. The man moved slightly, a spark of pink came into his cheeks, and he wearily opened his eyes with a new intelligence in them. For a moment the doctors debated whether he should be encouraged to speak, but the patient himself cut short the dispute by pronouncing some words, though in a scarcely audible tone. They were unintelligible, moreover, from being in a language which no one present understood.

"Where am I?" he whispered, this time in French.

"In Newfoundland — among friends!" impulsively replied the third physician.

A perplexed look crossed the man's face, fading gradually into the blank relapse of unconsciousness.

The doctor looked appealingly at the chief surgeon, asking:

"Before it's too late?"

He was answered by a nod of acquiescence, more stimulants were administered, and again the man seemed to revive, but very slightly. His lips moved, but he did not open his eyes.

"Who are your friends — tell us your name?" said the third medical man, speaking very distinctly, close to his ear. The dying man's lips moved again, a barely audible whisper escaped them, but the words were in the unknown former tongue. Their sound was like "Yager on dray." He repeated them twice, and after several minutes of silence again muttered, "Sood! Sood!"

"It's the end," said the third physician, turning away in disappointment. "He'll never speak again." And he was right. At half-past ten the man was dead, having uttered no other word.

The strange mystery of this Arctic castaway's life and death

continued to impress most powerfully the imagination of Lieutenant Ross. To fancy where he must have been, into what undiscovered regions he must have penetrated — perhaps the real El Dorado — was a fruitless and exasperating mental exercise, but one which he could not forego. The secret had eluded him, but the evidence of its existence remained. The scrap of yellow metal was gold beyond all doubt.

A month later Ross visited the college, where he told the story just as it is told here to one of the faculty, who chanced to be an authority on the northern languages. When Ross related the unknown man's frequent repetition of the word "Sood," he received an addition to his knowledge of comparative philology.

"None of you seem to have known Swedish," said the linguist. "'Syd,' pronounced 'Sood,' is the Swedish for 'south.'"

"Of course, we knew that south was meant," replied Ross, "but none of us identified it as Swedish." Then he went on and repeated the dying man's last words, as he recollected their sound.

"What's that?" cried the professor of languages, sharply.

"'Yager on dray' was what it sounded like," repeated Ross.

His listener sat literally tongue-tied.

"You pack of idiots!" he finally managed to articulate. "And you don't even seem to have tried to find out what those words meant. Why, you should have got interpreters for every known tongue! And to think you don't know who that man was! You don't know that you've watched one of the heroes of the century die! You —"

"Calm yourself," said Ross, "remember that the man could talk French, and that we could have understood all that he might have said, but for his fatal weakness. But," he added, with a vague premonition of some great loss to the world, "what do the words mean?"

"'Jeg er Andrée,'" said the linguist, slowly, "is Swedish for 'I am Andrée!'"

The Tale That Hasn't Been Told

O life is without some spice of romance or adventure — some happening out of the ordinary sequence of events. Stored in the mind of every intelligent man and woman is at least one original story, for the experience of every human being includes an incident or accident — an adventure or a conception of the imagination — which, told effectively, cannot fail to interest. If the readers are in other walks of life, have had other and different experiences, so much more will they be fascinated, for the novel and unexpected constitute the sauce which gives relish to the common fare of daily existence.

Never has the man or woman with a good story to tell had so wide a field, so vast a number of listeners, or so great an opportunity for profit as to-day. And the number of readers increases much more rapidly than the number of writers who gain the public ear. Few with something new to tell that this ever-increasing host of story readers wants to read have found a market, because they are unknown — lack literary reputation, which counts for so much with other publishers and counts for nothing with The Black Cat.

The greatest author is yet unknown, the best story is yet untold, for this is distinctively the age of progress in every department of human effort. The greatest song has not been composed. The last immortal poem has not been penned. The short story that may prove worthy the highest award ever bestowed is now lying fallow in the brain of some reader of this announcement.

$10,285 For Those Who Tell

The prize story contest of The Black Cat which is now open presents an extraordinary opportunity for known writers and the opportunity of a life-time for unknown writers. As, in the interest of its readers and publisher alike, The Black Cat is determined to publish the best stories that genius and skill can produce, all may assist in spreading the board from which they will feast in future by bringing this tournament to the notice of any who have stories to tell.

From the outset, The Black Cat has been conducted in the commonsense belief — which its whole experience confirms — that the art of story writing is not, in this age of intelligence, confined to any section or class, nor to be found in the possession of only a favored few. Accordingly, neither name nor fame has ever counted anything in the judging of stories submitted for its consideration. Neither previous achievements in literature, nor notoriety acquired in some other field, can take the place of merit in the story to be passed upon.

On the contrary, hundreds of men and women, before unknown, have, by its acceptance of their work, found their way into the ranks of the recognized and well-paid authors, and scarcely any of the army who have gained admission to the pages of The Black Cat are personally known to any one connected with it. It matters not whether a writer is known or unknown; if his work excels he has an equal chance of success with any and all, provided his story be submitted in accordance with the printed conditions.

What The Prizes Are

N this contest the prizes are the richest ever offered for short stories. From the beginning The Black Cat has paid five and ten times what other publications pay and now it surpasses its own unrivalled record. With the lowest prize $100 cash, and many others ranging from $125 to $2,100, their total aggregating $10,285, the opportunity to reap rich rewards is indeed a golden one.

The capital prize: a first-class tour of the world, consuming 179 days and costing $2,100, under the guidance of the famous house, The Raymond & Whitcomb Co., is far and away the most interesting, instructive, and luxurious reward ever offered for a short story; one cash prize of $1,000, one of $500, two of $300 each, a $1,300 steam automobile of latest model; three cash prizes of $200 each, four of $150 each; a $350 round-trip from Boston to San Francisco, consuming 20 days, a $150 round trip from Boston to Cuba, consuming 15 days, with sufficient cash to see, examine and enjoy; a $500 Crown Piano, renowned for its unsurpassed tone, quality and workmanship; five cash prizes of $125 each; an Angelus, $250, that marvel of mechanical ingenuity which plays perfectly any piano and doubles its pleasure; a $100 Oliver and $110 Fox writing machine; fifteen cash prizes of $100 each — these form an array of prizes that should tempt creative brains to tell for The Black Cat the cleverest tales ever told.

How To Win

A competitor need not cross the sea for a plot; need not step over the threshold of home to find material replete with human interest; need not journey beyond the portals of his or her own fancy for a story which, if well told, will charm the reading world. Select a subject with which you are familiar. A better story can be told about Mary Ann than has yet been told about Queen Anne. There are men and women without number who have the sort of stories to tell the public wants, and there are many exceptional men and women who possess ability sufficient to bring them fame and fortune if they could get a hearing. To all these The Black Cat will give a hearing. It is a matter of history and every-day occurrence that other publishers strive to catch popular favor by booming the fame of an author rather than by standing squarely on the merits of the author's writing. Indifferent stories by noted writers are eagerly bought and publicly praised before they are even written, while clever stories by unknown writers go begging for years after they are written.

The story of David Harum was offered to publisher after publisher and its invalid author never lived to see the marvelous success it achieved when it was finally offered to the public. Lorna Doone was rejected right and left. Eben Holden, another phenomenal hit, after being declined and declined and declined, scored so great a sale that its author's later stories were eagerly bought before they were begun.

Your Chance Of Success

NOT only in the amount of its prizes does The Black Cat tournament present to writers greater incentives than all other story contests, but the young and inexperienced in particular, whose work, while possessing merit, may still fail when brought into competition with that of the more experienced, find here their opportunity. For in addition to the stories receiving the prizes named on the preceding pages, amounting to $10,285, those unsuccessful in the competition but deemed desirable will, as explained in the printed conditions, receive special awards of not less than $100 each, or we will offer to purchase the same for cash. The increased chances which this gives to all who compete is shown by the circumstance that in previous contests more than $2,000 was paid for such unsuccessful yet available stories. Some stories have good plots, imperfectly developed; others need condensation or editing to be available, but contain clever incidents.

If you are in doubt as to the kind of story that will prove successful read in The Black Cat some of the tales that have won in former contests. The back numbers containing these will all soon be permanently out of print (half of them already are) and the Gripsack offer advertised on another page of this issue is one that every story lover and story writer should take advantage of. It can never be duplicated. Those having complete sets of all back numbers already ask two and three times the original cost.

Merit Alone Counts

From the first, The Black Cat has been exclusively devoted to short, original complete stories; has relied for success solely upon the superiority and excellence of its stories, and its founder and publisher has personally passed final judgment upon the manuscripts submitted. The phenomenal popular endorsement his judgment has received, the fact that no one can possibly have so great an interest in its future success as he personally has — these are the reasons why he will continue to be the judge as to what does and what does not meet the requirements of The Black Cat. In doing this he feels, moreover, that he is simply exercising the universal buyer's right: he who pays is entitled to his choice. That his decisions are free from favoritism and governed solely by merit is proved by the fact that not one of fifty of those whose stories have been accepted is personally known to him. As a check upon the wholesale offering of carelessly prepared, undesirable manuscripts, it is required that an annual subscription to The Black Cat be sent with each story submitted in this contest. As the cost of handling the manuscripts alone — recording, reading, filing and returning — will far exceed the amount received from subscriptions, and as the total outlay connected with the competition will exceed $30,000 the profits from subscription receipts cut absolutely no figure.

To facilitate careful consideration, deliberate judgment and prompt decision, it is necessary that competitors should send their stories as early as possible. Don't wait till the latest moment, but send your story as soon as it is ready, and be sure to comply with the conditions on page 47 of this issue.

BELOW is a list of the prizes. The capital prize -- first-class tour of the world ticket -- will be delivered to the winner with check covering expenses to Boston and return. The same applies to the 6th and 17th prizes. All cash prizes will be paid by certified check on The International Trust Company, of Boston. The Automobile, Piano, Angelus and Typewriters will be delivered, freight prepaid, at any railway station. If preferred, prizes Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 17, 23 or 24 may be converted into their cash equivalent, less the guarantee already paid to secure their delivery.

Total Prizes $10,285

1st.	Tour of The World, 179 days,	Actual Cost	$2,100
2d.	Skene Automobile,	Actual Cost	1,300
3d.	Cash		1,000
4th.	Cash		500
5th.	Crown Piano,	Actual Cost	500
6th.	Round Trip, Boston to San Francisco,		350
7th.	Cash		300
8th.	Cash		300
9th.	Angelus,	Actual Cost	250
10th.	Cash		200
11th.	Cash		200
12th.	Cash		200
13th to 16th.	Four Cash Prizes at $150 each		600
17th.	Round Trip, Boston to Cuba,		150
18th.	Cash		125
19th.	Cash		125
20th.	Cash		125
21st.	Cash		125
22d.	Cash		125
23d.	Fox Typewriter,	Actual Cost	110
24th.	Oliver Typewriter,	Actual Cost	100
25th to 39th.	15 Cash Prizes at $100 each		1,500

OMPETITORS may choose their own themes. We especially desire, however, stories in which the morbid, unnatural and unpleasant are avoided rather than emphasized. Good, clean, humorous tales are desirable. No dialect stories, translations, plays or poems will be considered; nor any story not submitted strictly in accordance with the conditions. We want original stories, out of the ordinary, free from commonplace and padding, and interesting throughout.

Conditions:

1. Each manuscript must bear at the top of the first page the writer's real name and address, in full (if it is desired that the story be published under a pen name that must likewise be given), as also the number of words it contains, which may range from 1,500 to 6,000, but must not exceed the latter. Other things being equal, the shorter of two stories will be preferred.

2. Manuscripts must be plainly written (with typewriter or pen) on one side of paper only, on sheets not larger than 8 x 11 inches, must be sent unrolled, *postage or express charges fully prepaid*, and accompanied by addressed and stamped envelopes for return. Letters advising submittal of stories must be *enclosed with manuscripts*, not sent separately. Manuscripts will be received and returned only at writers' risk. Upon our payment for a story the author relinquishes to us all rights thereto of whatsoever nature.

3. Every story must be strictly original and must, neither wholly nor in part, have appeared in print in any language. Every story will be judged solely on its own merits; the name or fame of a writer will carry absolutely no weight. And furthermore, every story will be valued, not in accordance with its length, but with its worth as a story.

4. With every manuscript there must be enclosed, in the same envelope, one yearly subscription to THE BLACK CAT, together with 50 cents to pay therefor. On subscriptions to foreign countries 24 cents must be added for postage. All money should be sent by draft, postal money order, express money order or registered letter. One- or two-cent postage stamps in perfect condition will also be accepted. If competitors are already subscribers to THE BLACK CAT or submit more than one manuscript, their existing subscriptions will, if desired, be extended or the new ones may be taken in the names of other parties. Any competitor may send as many stories as desired, but with each story all conditions must be complied with.

5. All envelopes containing manuscripts as above must be plainly marked "For Competition" and addressed, "The Shortstory Publishing Company, 144 High Street, Boston, Mass." Their receipt will be acknowledged.

6. The competition will close February 26, 1902. The awards will be paid within 60 days thereafter, and announced in the earliest possible issue of THE BLACK CAT. Should two stories of equal merit be considered worthy of a prize, the prize will be either doubled or divided.

7. For stories unsuccessful in the competition but deemed desirable, we will either award special prizes, of not less than $100 each, or make a cash offer. All unsuccessful manuscripts, submitted as above, will be returned after the contest has closed. The conditions and requirements being here fully set forth, we cannot enter into correspondence relative thereto.

Important. *As no story will be considered unless all the above conditions are complied with, competitors should make sure that their manuscripts are prepared strictly in accordance therewith, are securely sealed in strong envelopes, and fully prepaid. Don't hold your story till the latest moment, but send it as soon as ready, thus facilitating earliest possible decision.*

The Shortstory Publishing Company, Boston, Mass.